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### Editorial

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## Editorial

Dear readers of the *Journal of Carbohydrate Chemistry*,

As most of you know already, Professor Gérard Descotes was one of the original Regional Editors of the *Journal of Carbohydrate Chemistry*. When he chose to retire in 2001, he had held this position with enthusiasm and great professional input for 21 years. On that occasion, Don Kiely, the Editor of the JCC, had the privilege to acknowledge Professor Descotes' long outstanding contribution to the Journal (see Editorial, *J. Carbohydr. Chem.* 21(1&2) vii (2002)). It is now a great pleasure of all the contributors of this Special Issue of the *Journal of Carbohydrate Chemistry* to dedicate their work to Professor Descotes, on the occasion of his 70th birthday. It is indeed of great credit to Professor Descotes that so many authors joined in honouring him.

Professor Gérard Descotes received his education in Lyon, and there spent most of his career. He graduated as an engineer in chemistry from the ESCIL in 1954 and was appointed research fellow at the CNRS (French National Council of Research) the same year. Working in Professor J. Colonge's group, he obtained his Doctorat-ès-Sciences Physiques (Ph.D.) in 1958 from the University of Lyon for his work on the use of chlorobutynol and chlorobutenol in the synthesis of complex primary alcohols. He became a full researcher at the CNRS in 1956, and remained in Professor Colonge's group until he accepted a position as Associate Professor of Chemistry at the Université Claude Bernard Lyon I in 1962. Six years later, he was promoted to Full Professor at the Université, while in the meantime, he had been appointed Professor at the CNAM in Lyon and was giving classes at the ESCIL. Although dedicated to his teaching duties in Lyon, he was a Visiting Professor on several occasions, including in Canada (Edmonton, Montréal), Madagascar and Germany (Konstanz). In 1980, he was elected President of the French Group on Carbohydrates for two years. Since then, he served repeatedly as a Specialist in several University and National Committees.

As a newly appointed Professor, he created the "Laboratoire de Chimie Organique 2," which was mainly dedicated to the chemistry of oxygenated heterocycles as well as to the thermal and photochemical cyclisation of unsaturated alcohols or ketols. Professor Descotes' first steps in carbohydrate chemistry date back to 1973. His strong interest for the field led him to create, in 1976, a combined CNRS-University research department



dedicated to polyoxygenated compounds, which he headed until he retired. Major achievements include the investigation of the outcome of carbohydrates upon photolysis or thermolysis, the use of carbohydrates in homogeneous catalysis as well as the study of their reactivity at the anomeric center. The exploratory work on sucrose, which originated in 1984, opened new opportunities which indeed turned to be highly rewarding as illustrated by the launching in 1995 of the CNRS-Beghin Say Mixed Research Unit (UMR). Academic research aimed at industrial applications was the leading concept, which mainly focused on the industrial standing improvement of sucrose, based on a “no protecting group-chemistry.” In this context, particular interest was dedicated to chemistry in water, while new regioselective synthetic methodologies were studied extensively. In agreement with other European colleagues, he initiated in 1990 the symposia on “Carbohydrates as Raw Materials.” The latter, which is held on a 2-year basis, has since then become one of the classics.

Professor Descotes’ well-known contribution to organic synthesis and carbohydrate chemistry accounts for more than 340 scientific publications, including the input of more than a hundred Ph.D. students and that of numerous co-workers, as well as several international long-term collaborators. Indeed, some of his former students, co-workers, and collaborators honour him as contributors to this Special Issue. Professor Descotes’ remarkable contributions to the field have long been recognized. Indeed, he was the recipient of several awards, among which are the Europolé “Agro” award (1998) and the Marie Curie award (Lodz, 2000). In addition, he was elected Doctor Honoris Causa of the University of Debrecen (Hungary) in testimony of the long-term partnership he had with that University.

Whether at the Université Lyon I, at the ESCIL, or at the CNAM, Professor Descotes’ reputation as a teacher reached the highest standards. He was highly appreciated and respected by the students to whom he was teaching organic chemistry long before he introduced courses on carbohydrate chemistry. Amongst all, Professor Descotes was a demanding and innovative scientist whose greatest pleasure was to share the breadth and depth of his knowledge of chemistry with students and researchers as well as to lead them in new directions through cutting edge ideas. Along the years, his network of friends and collaborators has broadened far above the frontiers.

Dear Professor Descotes, we all wish you a very happy and fruitful retirement,

*Dr. Laurence A. Mulard*  
*Regional Editor*

